

# Looking Ahead

Over the past quarter century, EPA and its government and non-government partners have made significant progress in addressing environmental problems. In recent years, EPA has complemented its traditional regulatory and enforcement activities with innovative programs such as market-based approaches to environmental protection. In addition, EPA is undertaking many new initiatives that will help us provide a safer environment for our children and future generations. Several of these initiatives: regulatory reinvention, collaborating with states and Indian nations, environmental justice, protecting children's health, improving urban environments, community-based environmental protection, and enhancing public access to environmental information, are outlined below. Public participation at all stages is at the center of each initiative.

## Regulatory Reinvention

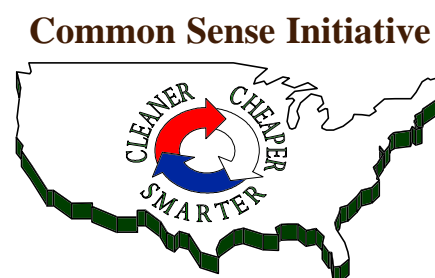
EPA Region 2 has been at the forefront of the Agency's efforts to encourage innovative strategies to make environmental protection "cleaner, cheaper, and smarter." Through programs such as Project XL, the Common Sense Initiative, and the New Jersey Chemical Industry Project, Region 2 has worked with industry, the public, and state and local organizations to identify regulatory changes that will result in higher levels of environmental protection at lower cost to the regulated community.



Project XL, which stands for eXcellence and Leadership, is a national program designed around three key elements: stronger environmental performance, meaningful stakeholder involvement, and regulatory flexibility. This effort challenges the regulated community—facilities, industry sectors, and government agencies—with a proven track record of environmental performance, to find cleaner, cheaper ways of protecting the environment in return for the flexibility needed to implement the proposed activities. Region 2 currently has two XL projects underway, both in

New York, and is working with the regulated community to identify additional projects.

Early in her tenure as EPA Administrator, Carol Browner launched the Common Sense Initiative (CSI) as a "fundamentally different system" for exploring industry-specific, multi-stakeholder approaches to environmental protection. For each industry, known as a "sector" in the CSI program, EPA convenes a team of stakeholders that looks for opportunities to change complicated and sometimes inconsistent environmental policies into comprehensive environmental strategies for the future. The process, while lengthy, is producing better, more applicable environmental protection strategies developed by those who have to live with them—avoiding costly and time consuming adversarial processes later.



Region 2 has been involved in CSI since the program's inception, and has taken the lead in the printing sector activities. Through CSI, the New York City Education Project was launched in Region 2 to promote pollution prevention in the everyday practices of small printers. This program provides printers with educational materials about pollution prevention, promotes awareness of the adverse effects from printing shops on surrounding communities, and fosters cooperation among printers, customers, and regulators. This project culminated in the development of a technical assistance guide for New York City printers developed with contributions by over a dozen city, state, federal, trade and non-governmental organizations.

## New Jersey Chemical Industry Project

Through the New Jersey Chemical Industry Project, Region 2 is participating in two major efforts to demonstrate the benefits of innovative approaches to permits that will achieve "cleaner, cheaper, and smarter" results. The first project consists of a market-based approach to reduc-

ing chemical industry pollutant discharges to sewage treatment facilities. This pilot program allows industrial contributors to such treatment systems to trade allocated heavy metal limits among themselves as long as an overall discharge reduction of 20 percent is achieved. This pilot demonstrates that market-based environmental protection efforts can lead to technology improvements, regulatory flexibility and an overall environmental benefit. The second project, the "Flexible Track Program," provides the regulated community regulatory flexibility in return for exemplary and enhanced environmental performance.

## Collaborating with States and Indian Nations

To build stronger relationships with its closest partners, EPA is developing Performance Partnership Agreements (PPAs) and providing Performance Partnership Grants (PPGs) to state and Indian Nation environmental agencies. In 1995, the National Environmental Performance Partnership System (NEPPS) was established jointly by EPA and the Environmental Council of States to allow states greater flexibility in directing resources toward their highest priority problems and in determining how best to achieve demonstrable environmental results. PPAs are a key element of a state's or Indian Nation's participation in NEPPS. PPGs provide states and Indian Nations with administrative flexibility to manage multiple environmental grant programs.

Working with the state of New Jersey, Region 2 completed one of the first PPAs nation-wide in 1996. Currently, New Jersey has a comprehensive agreement covering all aspects of its environmental programs, and a PPG covering 11 EPA grant programs. In 1997, the state of New York entered into a combined PPA/PPG that covers three water programs, while the Virgin Islands opted for a PPG covering seven grant programs. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe also entered into a PPG in 1998, which covers three grant programs. Region 2 is working with Puerto Rico and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe to develop Performance Partnership Agreements for 1999 activities.

In addition to developing PPAs, the Region is working to build government-to-government relationships with all seven federally-recognized Indian Nations. The Region provides grant assistance to support environmental capac-

ity-building and direct program implementation by the Indian Nations, helps coordinate environmental planning, and provides emergency response and technical assistance when needed. Open lines of communication and a strong relationship are also fostered through annual meetings among the leaders of the Indian Nations and Region 2.

## Environmental Justice

Minority and low-income communities across the country have raised concerns that they are disproportionately affected by health and environmental impacts due to the siting of polluting facilities in their neighborhoods. In 1994, recognizing these concerns, President Clinton signed an Executive Order requiring all federal agencies to make environmental justice part of their mission. In Region 2, these efforts include the assurance that environmental regulations are fairly and equally enforced in all communities, and an outreach program that provides educational and financial resources to communities to assist them in identifying and addressing local environmental problems.



Region 2's financial and outreach support to the Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA), a group committed to providing migrant farmworkers in southern New Jersey with education on contaminated drinking water, is one of the Region's environmental justice initiatives. Working with health clinics, environmental groups, and other members of the community, CATA conducts well-water sampling and environmental assessments, and empowers farmworkers to protect themselves against drinking water contaminated by agricultural runoff and malfunctioning septic systems.



## Children's Health

Children face significant health and developmental threats stemming from exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollution, contaminated soil and lead paint. In

Region 2, these threats are manifested in an incidence of childhood asthma in the South Bronx, East Harlem and urban portions of Puerto Rico at rates exceeding most other parts of the country. In addition, children living in older housing stock are often disproportionately affected by exposure to lead-based paint, which can severely impact their development and cause acute health problems.

To address these problems, EPA's new Office of Children's Health Protection is working with community groups and industry to develop innovative strategies to better protect children's health. Region 2 is working with the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark, New Jersey on a children's health pilot program designed to help communities identify the primary environmental risks to children, set community-specific risk reduction goals and design a plan to achieve those goals. Approximately 25 percent of the Ironbound area's population is less than eight years old. EPA is collaborating with the Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC), a group representing over 40,000 residents with a median per capita income of \$11,000 per year living in a portion of the city with a significant industrial presence.

## Urban Environments

EPA has, in recent years, focused attention on improving the urban environment. Many urban areas have populations, often of minorities and children, that are disproportionately affected by pollution and unhealthy indoor environments. Through our environmental justice and children's health initiatives discussed above, Region 2 seeks to reduce health risks to these populations. In addition, through the Brownfields Economic Redevelopment program, Region 2 is working in partnership with

communities, states, and other federal agencies to redevelop many idled or under-used industrial and commercial facilities in urban areas and return these properties to beneficial use. Cleaning up and restoring these "brownfields" can reduce public health threats from on-site contamination, and foster economic growth in formerly blighted areas.



Michael Stoller

## Community-Based Environmental Protection (CBEP)

People who work, live, and have businesses in a community have a common interest in protecting their shared environment and quality of life. The defining element of community-based environmental protection is that community members work together to develop plans and goals to address their own environmental concerns. The Region supports these efforts in a number of ways, both through its direct work with communities and other stakeholders, and by providing technical and financial assistance to build local capacity. For example, EPA's Sustainable Development Challenge Grants provide funding for projects designed to help communities ensure long-term environmental protection through the use of sustainable development strategies. Region 2 is also developing a CBEP capacity-building "tool box" of more than 20 approaches that will help communities identify environmental problems, set priorities, and develop plans to address local concerns.

An innovative EPA CBEP project in the Barceloneta-Manati area of Puerto Rico has been underway with the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board since 1996. The goals of the project are to enhance local capacity for pre-

venting ground water contamination and to help implement the first local wellhead protection program in Puerto Rico. The project area includes eight municipalities in the north-central coast region, where a limestone aquifer provides drinking water to over 250,000 citizens.

## Enhancing Public Access to Environmental Data

Based on the success of the Toxics Release Inventory program, which has enhanced public access and led industry to voluntarily reduce toxic emissions, EPA continues to identify ways to improve environmental data and make it more accessible to the public. EPA is currently working with the states and the regulated community on eliminating unnecessary reporting requirements, yet ensuring that the data collected are meaningful for both regulatory and public access purposes.

This State of the Environment Report represents but one component of Region 2's commitment to providing environmental information. We are constantly increasing the amount of information available on our web site, and continually striving to provide information in a format,

and at a level of detail of use to the public. In addition to improving the content of our data, and making it easier to find, we are enhancing how we present environmental information with Geographic Information Systems (GIS). We recognize that effective communication is a two-way process and look forward to your feedback on this document and the information available on our web site.

## Closing Thoughts

Moving into the next century, the Region will continue to work diligently to protect human health and the environment. In future Reports, we will discuss how these efforts are progressing. Are programs in place to involve communities in decision making and how well are they working? How accessible is environmental information and how good is it? Answers to these questions, coupled with updated information on air, water, and land will serve as measures of our progress in achieving our environmental goals. We will also be preparing a strategic plan that will help us better focus our resources on the highest priority environmental problems. We call on you—in every corner of our diverse and magnificent Region—to help us solve those problems.

### For More Information

#### Information on National Environmental Performance Partnership System:

<http://www.epa.gov/regional/pps/>  
<http://www.epa.gov/region02/nepps/nepps.htm>  
<http://www.sso.org/ecos/>

#### Center for Environmental Information and Statistics:

<http://www.epa.gov/ceis/>

#### Envirofacts Warehouse:

<http://www.epa.gov/enviro/>

#### Project XL:

<http://www.epa.gov/oppeosc/ProjectXLC/ProjectXLC.htm>  
<http://www.epa.gov/r02earth/hazwaste/r2-hadco.htm>

#### Common Sense Initiative:

<http://www.epa.gov/commonsense/bckgrd.htm>

#### Children's Health:

<http://www.epa.gov/children/>